



FROM YOUR CFS **Wellness Specialist**



When Your Child Sabotages Christmas

For many parents, Christmas is a joyful time, but for others, it brings stress due to their child's challenging behaviors. These behaviors—like outbursts, defiance, or rejecting gifts—are common, particularly among children with trauma histories or sensory issues, including foster or adopted children. Understanding the reasons behind these actions can help parents approach the holidays with greater compassion and preparedness.

Some children struggle with the **unpredictability of holidays**, as routines provide a sense of safety. Sudden changes, like holiday events or altered schedules, can trigger fears and dysregulation. **Sensory overload** is another factor. Christmas festivities often include bright lights, loud music, and new smells, which can overwhelm children with sensory processing difficulties. This may lead to accidents, like breaking decorations or gifts, due to struggles with balance or coordination.

Trauma can also lower a child's emotional age, causing them to act much younger than their chronological age. Children from hard places often have not developed cause-and-effect thinking, so they might not logically think ahead to the fact that if they break their gifts, their gifts will stay broken!

Trust issues are common in children from unstable backgrounds. They may mistrust their parents' intentions or feel loyalty to past caregivers, resisting attachment to their current family. Others **feel unworthy of love and nice things**, stemming from poor self-esteem or feelings of shame.

Social skills pose another challenge. Holiday etiquette, like thanking gift-givers or taking turns, may be unfamiliar. For some children, even the joy of receiving gifts feels uncomfortable if it contrasts sharply with previous negative holiday experiences.

While verbal or physical outbursts and meltdowns can drain parents, seek strength and peace in Christ Jesus. He experienced human struggles and understands these difficulties. Turning to Him in prayer can help parents find calm and hope during this season. He is the source of all joy and peace.

Wishing you God's blessings as you take your stress to him in prayer and lean on his promise to answer.

For a deeper dive, we recommend:

[Understanding the reasons for sabotaging behavior](#)
[10 strategies to prevent and address holiday challenges](#)